

Figure 1-1 presents 2020 No-Action (Baseline) population and employment forecasts for the Study Area (ACG, 2000). A Transportation System Improvement is needed to aid in focusing this growth in a manner consistent with local plans and to meet the transportation infrastructure demands created by this growth.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Development**

Preserving environmentally sensitive resources within the Project Corridor is a primary planning goal of regional, county and local government. At the regional level, “providing a transportation system that is sensitive to the quality of the environment and enhances our natural resources” is one of seven principal goals of the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan. This goal incorporates six environmental objectives. Objectives of relevance are:

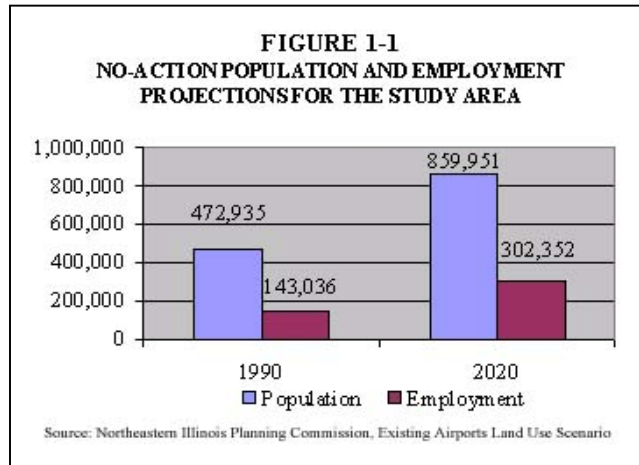
- Develop a transportation system that avoids or minimizes adverse impacts on environmentally sensitive areas and valuable man-made or natural resources.
- Encourage the design of transportation facilities that minimize adverse noise and vibration impacts.
- Encourage the development of transportation rights-of-way to reduce maintenance costs; improve biodiversity, water quality, and aesthetics; and manage stormwater.

Also at the regional level, the adopted NIPC regional growth strategy incorporates the following policy:

- Protect floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas from development. This policy encourages the preservation and protection of sensitive lands within built-up, developing and rural areas of the region.

At the county level, the Will County Land Use Plan identifies protecting environmental areas and linked open spaces as a principal planning goal. At the municipal level, land use plans of the Project Corridor municipalities include policy statements such as: 1) The City shall take actions to maintain and manage natural resources and protect them from loss and degradation. (Lockport, 1997), 2) The bluffs, the drainage ways, wetlands and mature groves of trees are some of the natural features that Lemont must strive to protect from the impacts of land development (Lemont, 1993) and 3) Preserving existing natural features – streams, wetlands, floodplains, major tree stands and significant drainage swales is a primary objective of the land use plan (New Lenox, 1997).

Consistent with these goals and objectives, Project Corridor development has and will continue to be regulated in a manner consistent with preserving environmentally sensitive



resources. A Transportation System Improvement is needed to promote these preservation goals by providing a corridor for which to focus growth into more compact development patterns ([ACG 2000](#)).

### **1.2.3 Improve Regional Mobility**

Improve regional mobility addresses the need to develop a Transportation System Improvement that improves regional access by reducing regional travel times. The need for improved regional mobility is documented by forecasted year 2020 travel times.

Exhibit 1-5 presents the percent increase in peak (7-9 am) travel times between 1996 and 2020 for three points of origin that surround the Project Corridor. Two of the three origin points represent existing interchanges at I-55/I-294 and I-55/I-80. These locations represent route decision points for regional travel.

The third origin point represents the location where I-80 enters the Study Area. This point was selected because no interchanges exist between I-80 and another interstate within the Study Area. However, I-80 at this location is primarily used for regional travel ([CATS, 1998](#)).

As evident in Exhibit 1-5, CATS projects regional travel times from the Project Corridor to increase 12 to over 25 percent to over three quarters of the region by year 2020 under the No-Action (Baseline) scenario. Increased regional travel times, particularly at the I-55/I-80 interchange and where I-80 enters the Project Corridor are due in large part to the lack of a direct route connecting I-80 and I-55 within the Project Corridor.

### ***System Continuity***

While additional capacity for north-south travel is needed to reduce travel times and improve regional mobility, adding capacity in a form that integrates into the existing highway network is also needed. This includes providing a Transportation System Improvement that matches the functional design of the system for which it connects. Maintaining continuity in facility type is an important consideration to improving regional mobility by optimizing safety and carrying capacity. Safety and carrying capacity are optimized when two connecting roadways are of the same type and provide continuity in travel speed, access control, roadway width and lane number ([AASHTO, 1990](#)). Refer to [Draft SEIS, Section 1.2.1](#) for a complete discussion of the need to improve regional travel time and system continuity.

### **1.2.4 Address Local System Deficiencies**

Address local system deficiencies considers the need to enhance accessibility and mobility within the Project Corridor. The need for improved local accessibility and mobility is documented through review of forecasted year 2020 travel times and safety within the Corridor. Within the Project Corridor, year 2020 No-Action Baseline travel times and accidents are projected to increase 151 percent and 43 percent, respectively.

### ***Local Roadway System Deficiencies***

Local roadway system deficiencies include the lack of a direct roadway for north-south travel, a limited number of bridge crossings over the Des Plaines River and an inefficient